

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

May 9, 2003

The Honorable Ted Stevens
Chairman
Subcommittee On Defense
Committee On Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On April 7, a B-1B bomber, flown by a crew from Ellsworth Air Force Base, carried out an attack in downtown Baghdad against a facility believed to hold Saddam Hussein. This mission illustrated many of the unique capabilities that make the B-1 bomber an essential component of our nation's military force. The mission against Saddam demonstrated the rapidity with which the B-1 can deliver ordnance on target – bombs were falling on the target zone just 12 minutes after the crew received its orders and 45 minutes after intelligence sources first reported Hussein's possible whereabouts. The mission also showcased the flexibility and capacity of the B-1 bomber. After releasing four one-ton bombs against a target in Baghdad, this plane flew on to hit 17 more targets in two locations, about 200 miles from each other, before returning safely to its base.

Despite this latest demonstration of its capabilities, the Defense Department continues to implement its 2001 decision to retire all but 60 B-1s. We believe this decision exposed the nation to an unacceptable level of risk and urge you to reconsider the retirement program as now structured. This action can be easily accomplished by returning to duty those planes not yet sent to storage, as well as those sent to inviolate storage last fall. It would better align B-1 resources with the needs of the Air Force's air expeditionary force (AEF) rotation system. In addition, such a change would extend the lifetime of existing B-1 airframes and ensure that our military requirements will be met even when some planes are taken out of service for maintenance and upgrade-installation work.

As you know, the last comprehensive review of bomber needs, the *U.S. Air Force White Paper on Long Range Bombers*, determined that 93 B-1s were needed to protect U.S. national security interests. Since the report's March 1999 release, B-1s have been employed – with great success – in campaigns in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Nevertheless, the Defense Department brushed aside the report's findings and opted to retire one-third of the fleet. In addition, subsequent to this decision, important questions have been raised about the policy foundations of the 2001 DoD retirement announcement. According to a report released last fall by the General Accounting Office, the DoD move “was not based on a formal analysis” and “not vetted through established DOD budget processes that normally involve a wider range of participants and generally allow more time for analysis of proposed changes.”

The Honorable Ted Stevens
May 9, 2003
Page 2

Our B-1 fleet is a unique resource that should not be consigned casually to the Arizona desert. No U.S. airplane has a larger weapons payload than the B-1. Its speed allows it to integrate seamlessly into strike packages with fighter planes. Its large fuel load allows it to fly from great distances and loiter for hours over the battlefield, ready to strike targets of opportunity within minutes of identification. Moreover, satellite-guided JDAM munitions, new targeting and surveillance methods, and new communication technologies have produced dramatic advances in the B-1's combat effectiveness. This explains why the B-1 accounts for nearly 25 percent of all aerial munitions employed in Iraq. Indeed, Air Force Secretary James Roche said in early April, "Right now, the JDAMs on the B-1 have been the weapon of choice."

To keep pace with the call for B-1 strikes during the war, missions were flown around the clock. *Aviation Week* reported that Lt. General T. Michael Moseley, the Central Command's air commander, personally managed the B-1's scheduling, because they were limited in number and considered so important to the campaign. Through this heavy use, the B-1's mission-capable rate for Operation Iraqi Freedom has been 80 percent, consistent with its reliability record during Operation Enduring Freedom over Afghanistan.

We believe it is time for a new assessment of heavy bomber needs and urge you to consider rebuilding the B-1 force. Although we look to your committee for an assessment of the full spending implications, we believe there would be little immediate impact on capital spending. Based on our assessment of conditions at Ellsworth Air Force Base, this base already possesses infrastructure adequate to support additional planes as well as all required personnel.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,



Tom Daschle
U.S. Senate



Tim Wirth
U.S. Senate



William Janklow
U.S. House of Representatives

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

May 9, 2003

The Honorable Daniel Inouye
Ranking Member
Subcommittee On Defense
Committee On Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Inouye:

On April 7, a B-1B bomber, flown by a crew from Ellsworth Air Force Base, carried out an attack in downtown Baghdad against a facility believed to hold Saddam Hussein. This mission illustrated many of the unique capabilities that make the B-1 bomber an essential component of our nation's military force. The mission against Saddam demonstrated the rapidity with which the B-1 can deliver ordnance on target – bombs were falling on the target zone just 12 minutes after the crew received its orders and 45 minutes after intelligence sources first reported Hussein's possible whereabouts. The mission also showcased the flexibility and capacity of the B-1 bomber. After releasing four one-ton bombs against a target in Baghdad, this plane flew on to hit 17 more targets in two locations, about 200 miles from each other, before returning safely to its base.

Despite this latest demonstration of its capabilities, the Defense Department continues to implement its 2001 decision to retire all but 60 B-1s. We believe this decision exposed the nation to an unacceptable level of risk and urge you to reconsider the retirement program as now structured. This action can be easily accomplished by returning to duty those planes not yet sent to storage, as well as those sent to inviolate storage last fall. It would better align B-1 resources with the needs of the Air Force's air expeditionary force (AEF) rotation system. In addition, such a change would extend the lifetime of existing B-1 airframes and ensure that our military requirements will be met even when some planes are taken out of service for maintenance and upgrade-installation work.

As you know, the last comprehensive review of bomber needs, the *U.S. Air Force White Paper on Long Range Bombers*, determined that 93 B-1s were needed to protect U.S. national security interests. Since the report's March 1999 release, B-1s have been employed – with great success – in campaigns in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Nevertheless, the Defense Department brushed aside the report's findings and opted to retire one-third of the fleet. In addition, subsequent to this decision, important questions have been raised about the policy foundations of the 2001 DoD retirement announcement. According to a report released last fall by the General Accounting Office, the DoD move “was not based on a formal analysis” and “not vetted through established DOD budget processes that normally involve a wider range of participants and generally allow more time for analysis of proposed changes.”

The Honorable Daniel Inouye
May 9, 2003
Page 2

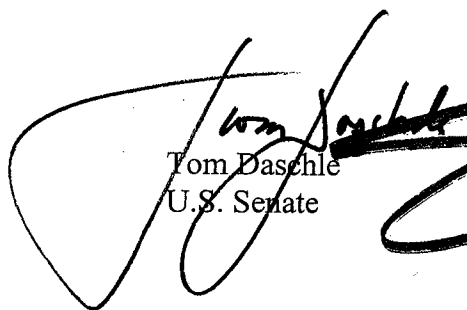
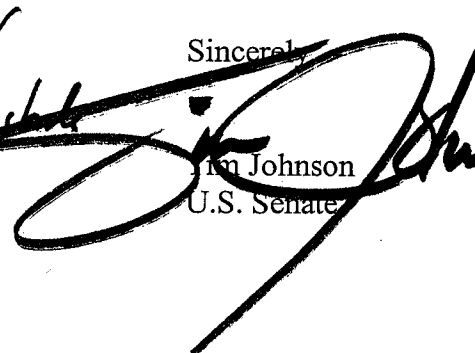

Our B-1 fleet is a unique resource that should not be consigned casually to the Arizona desert. No U.S. airplane has a larger weapons payload than the B-1. Its speed allows it to integrate seamlessly into strike packages with fighter planes. Its large fuel load allows it to fly from great distances and loiter for hours over the battlefield, ready to strike targets of opportunity within minutes of identification. Moreover, satellite-guided JDAM munitions, new targeting and surveillance methods, and new communication technologies have produced dramatic advances in the B-1's combat effectiveness. This explains why the B-1 accounts for nearly 25 percent of all aerial munitions employed in Iraq. Indeed, Air Force Secretary James Roche said in early April, "Right now, the JDAMs on the B-1 have been the weapon of choice."

To keep pace with the call for B-1 strikes during the war, missions were flown around the clock. *Aviation Week* reported that Lt. General T. Michael Moseley, the Central Command's air commander, personally managed the B-1's scheduling, because they were limited in number and considered so important to the campaign. Through this heavy use, the B-1's mission-capable rate for Operation Iraqi Freedom has been 80 percent, consistent with its reliability record during Operation Enduring Freedom over Afghanistan.

We believe it is time for a new assessment of heavy bomber needs and urge you to consider rebuilding the B-1 force. Although we look to your committee for an assessment of the full spending implications, we believe there would be little immediate impact on capital spending. Based on our assessment of conditions at Ellsworth Air Force Base, this base already possesses infrastructure adequate to support additional planes as well as all required personnel.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Tom Daschle
U.S. Senate

Jim Johnson
U.S. Senate

William Janklow
U.S. House of Representatives